BLOG: Seth and the City: Payne given environmental award by a longtime admirer

Seth and the City (Bangor Daily News)

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Body

May 19--As the story goes, Laura Sewall wasn't even living in Maine yet when during a visit to Portland, she recognized increasingly well-known environmentalist Joe Payne at a traffic light.

Sewall, who would go on to become director of the Bates College Morse Mountain Conservation Area, decided to ambush the unsuspecting Casco Baykeeper.

Here's how she retells it:

I'd heard about Joe even before I moved to Maine some dozen years ago. His image was so solidly in my mind that when I first saw him, from the back, at a stoplight in Portland, I jumped out of my car, ran to his truck, and said, 'You don't know me, but you are my hero!'

At the time I knew that he had co-founded the Waterkeeper Alliance, and that he had a reputation for being able to balance legal tools with the wisdom of knowing a place, knowing the science, and being trusted by the people. He sounded like a wizard who was part mediator, part lawyer, scientist, and nature lover.

[http://sethkoenig.bangordailynews.com/files/2012/05/Casco-Baykeeper-Joe-Payne.jpg]

Joe Payne accepts the Bates-Morse Mountain Award for Environmental Lifetime Achievement (photo courtesy Friends of Casco Bay).

http://sethkoenig.bangordailynews.com/files/2012/05/Casco-Baykeeper-Joe-Payne-300x225.jpg" alt=" [http://sethkoenig.bangordailynews.com/files/2012/05/Casco-Baykeeper-Joe-Payne-300x225.jpg]

He wasn't, as it turned out, enough of a wizard to magically extract her name before the light turned green, nor was he enough of a lawyer to consider a restraining order after the incident.

Fast forward to 2012, and Sewall did the honors recently of presenting Payne with the Bates-Morse Mountain Award for Environmental Lifetime Achievement. This represents the second big award recently accepted by Payne, who received an Environment Merit lifetime achievement award [http://sethkoenig.bangordailynews.com/2012/05/04/whats-happening/environmentalist-payne-shares-honor/] from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency just a few weeks ago.

Payne, being the humble fellow he is, for the second time in as many award ceremonies spread the credit among those who work with him:

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I can only accept this award for the whole team at Friends of Casco Bay, including staff and former staff, our colleagues and members, and our many volunteers over the years.

Cathy Ramsdell, executive director of Friends of Casco Bay, was willing to volley the appreciation right back at Joe:

We say he is gracious and tenacious. As the Casco Baykeeper for Friends of Casco Bay, he uses a science-based, work-with approach to problem solving that has infused our organization with the spirit of collaboration.

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